

Dear Chairman Powell and Commissioners,

I am a citizen who wants to be informed about the political and electoral issues that affect my life. I look to television to provide this programming but I am continually disappointed by the lack of factual television programming covering the issues.

Local public affairs programming is virtually non-existent--constituting less than one half of 1% of all local programming. More than half of news broadcasts prior to the 2002 elections did not include a single campaign story. Our democracy is at risk when many Americans don't know basic facts about the candidates or the issues, as was the case in the 2000 elections.

Broadcasters have clearly failed in their obligation to serve the public interest and it is time for the FCC to define meaningful public interest requirements. These should include local civic and electoral affairs programming at prime or reasonable times of day, not early mornings or late nights. At a minimum, broadcasters should air three hours per week of local civic and electoral affairs programming, with at least two hours devoted to substantive election coverage, not just sound bites, in the six weeks prior to Election Day.

Citizens who are informed by access to a diversity of opinions and voices on the choices confronting us are what constitutes a well-functioning democracy. Real patriotism involves thinking and asking the hard questions before coming to a decision.

Sincerely,

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